

extend this right to American parents and their adopted children. Everyone in the Senate supports adoption, and we should make sure the law expresses that support.

Many Senators on both sides of the aisle worked hard to see this bill become law, and I would like in particular to commend Senator LANDRIEU for her efforts. She and her staff were dedicated to this bill and were instrumental in its passage.

I hope that we are able today to move forward on a number of pieces of legislation. First, I hope we can pass the bill that extends the program under which religious workers can obtain visas to enter the U.S. Senator KENNEDY has championed this legislation, it has significant bipartisan support, and there is no reason not to act quickly to pass it. We should also pass the bill benefiting Syrian Jews that Senator SCHUMER has advocated, as well as legislation benefiting the Hmong people, which the late Congressman Bruce Vento did so much to promote. Although many of the larger immigration issues that should have been addressed in this Congress—from reforming expedited removal to restoring due process rights for legal permanent residents—may regrettably remain unresolved, we can at least take these more limited steps and demonstrate some commitment to immigrants and a sound immigration policy.

#### VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to explain my vote against the Boxer amendment No. 4308 to the FY01 VA/HUD Appropriations bill.

This amendment addressed two issues which are very important to Michiganders: clean air and clean water. Unfortunately, whatever the intentions of the author, the amendment would have done more harm than good. I particular, I was troubled by the attempt to strike language which will prevent the EPA from designating Michigan counties as being in nonattainment, or not meeting clear air requirements.

On May 14, 1999, the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, in *American Trucking Association v USEPA*, ruled that the 8-hour ozone standard as proposed by EPA be remanded to EPA for further consideration. The 8-hour standard was therefore suspended. The court specifically noted that USEPA retains the power to designate areas as nonattainment under a revised national Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS), however, there must be a legal standard in place before USEPA makes such designations. Since the 8-hour standard was remanded, it is not legal NAAQS.

In response, EPA announced its intention to reinstate applicability of the one-hour ozone standard. However, in determining which communities were in nonattainment under the one-hour standard, EPA intended to make air

quality designations based on the designations of these areas at the time the 1-hour standard was originally revoked, rather than rely on the most recent air quality data.

Under this proposed action, six Michigan counties would have been in nonattainment even though all six have monitoring data measuring attainment—Midland, Bay, Saginaw, Genesee, Muskegon, and Allegan. These are counties that were previously designated as nonattainment of the 1-hour standard. Although they were previously designated as nonattainment, only Muskegon was “classified” under the classification scheme of the Clean Air Act. Thus, only Muskegon County was subject to the major ozone control programs, but all nonattainment counties are subject to tougher permit and offset requirements.

Even though these counties are now in attainment, tougher permit standards would have been required for new major stationary sources just because these counties were previously designated as nonattainment for the 1-hour standard. Additionally, offset requirements for major stationary sources would have applied. In addition, these six counties would have had to resume doing transportation and general conformity for projects receiving federal funds. Under the revocation, conformity was not a requirement. Conformity was a continuing requirement for redesignated areas.

Shortly after the announcement, I made clear to USEPA that in my opinion there was no rational basis for intentionally jeopardizing economic development and the construction of much-needed road projects in areas that are meeting attainment levels for the 1-hour ozone standard. Further, I noted that EPA should not disregard air quality improvements made in several areas of the state and should base any non-attainment designations under this rulemaking on the most current air quality monitoring data available.

To date, I have not been satisfied with the response from USEPA and for that reason, I supported the language included in the FY01 VA/HUD Appropriations bill. This language will prevent EPA from designating any Michigan county as nonattainment for the next 12 months or until the courts have settled the pending matter, whichever happens first. In fact, I understand that EPA actually agreed to this language in a compromise with the house.

It was unfortunate that the Boxer amendment also sought to permit EPA to move forward on a new arsenic standard. This is an issue which I believe merits independent consideration. I understand the arsenic standard has not been updated in almost 60 years. However, I am concerned that the push to lower the standard to 5ppb from the current 50ppb may be too extreme. While large water systems may be able to comply with such a strict requirement, I am not at all certain that smaller systems which serve a great

percentage of the Michigan population would be able to comply with that standard. They would therefore be subject to penalties for their inability to comply with yet another unfunded mandate. In any event, I look forward to the opportunity to consider this issue on its own merit, and urge the EPA to base whatever standard it eventually proposes on sound science and even then only after extensive peer review.

#### NATIONAL HISPANIC MONTH

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I join many of my colleagues in commemorating National Hispanic Heritage Month. The nationwide celebration of Hispanic heritage was initiated by the 90th Congress in 1968, which designated National Hispanic Heritage Week. Twenty years later, the 100th Congress transformed this week into a month, designating the period of September 15 to October 15 as a time to recognize the Hispanic influence in and contributions to our culture and society.

For over 400 years, Hispanic Americans have played a fundamental role in the history of the United States. The first European expedition in recorded history to land in what is today the continental United States was led by the former Spanish Governor of the Island of Puerto Rico, Juan Ponce de Leon.

America's diverse and vibrant Hispanic population has made an enormous contributions to the building and strengthening of our nation, its culture, and its economic prowess. As we cross the threshold of a new century, we look to the outstanding contributions of Hispanic Americans for inspiration and leadership. My hometown, Detroit, was made great in the twentieth century in part by immigrants who went there to find work and provide for their families. This great dream lives on today as thousands of immigrants come to Detroit every year from countries like Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala and Cuba. In fact, Southwest Detroit, known as Mexicantown by its residents, is the fastest growing part of Detroit. Hispanics who have come to Detroit have opened businesses, bought homes and turned a once neglected urban neighborhood into a thriving community that has become one of the centers of the city.

One woman, Maria Elena Rodriguez, has had a lot to do with this turnaround. Her hard work as president of the Mexicantown Community Development Corporation has helped to provide the spark needed to reinvigorate a community. Ms. Rodriguez is currently in the process of helping to build a welcome center for people coming into Detroit across the Ambassador Bridge, an effort she hopes will fulfil her mission to bring more business and visitors to her neighborhood.